

systems are analysed by common sense. The reason is that mathematical analysis (even non-linear) is not applicable until the type of system has been exposed by simpler methods first.

This volume of contributions, admirably edited and produced (although the professional indexer has obviously struggled over such diverse material as stilboestrol, James Watt, property tenure and wrongdoing) serves a useful purpose in cementing the marriage of biology and control theory: it is sad that so little fruit is borne.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Comfort, Alex. *The Anxiety Makers*. London, 1967. Nelson. Pp. 208. Price 30s.

ANXIETY HAS BEEN described as one of the diseases of civilization. Perhaps one should widen this description and refer to it as one of the diseases of human kind. It seems that we have been conditioned to pay in advance for pleasure by an uneasy conscience. Dr. Comfort in his witty and iconoclastic way blames the medical profession, past and present, to a great extent for support of the accepted morality of the time. His thesis is that to buttress conventional morality doctors have laboured to create anxiety, thus enabling fear to be the sanction. How much better (he implies) to enlighten and inform; and thereby to allow reason and common sense to lead to intelligent modes of conduct.

An example *par excellence* of such an attitude was that of William Acton (at least in his writings on reproduction), whose views may be summarized—"muscular manhood is the reward of being sufficiently and strenuously anxious" and this anxiety is carried over from the need for pre-marital continence to the utmost restraint within marriage. The anxiety produced by the preceding, however, is nothing compared with that which had to be produced to guard against masturbation. Illustrations are given of fearsome restraint appliances designed to make self-manipulation impossible (both male and female) and these from catalogues dated 1904 and even 1930.

A whole host of bogies was raised as being the possible result of constipation starting principally with the misunderstanding and misquotation of the work of the great Dr. Abernethy, the misunderstanding being apparently fostered to puff the publications and products of a bookseller and quack apothecary of the time. (The parallels with the wrongly-directed advertising experts, who are the present-day anxiety makers even more potent than the doctors, can clearly be seen.)

Another characteristic of imposed morality is to resist anything that can reduce the penalties of opposing it, as when sexual freedom was confined in the past by "God's Little Allies", the gonococcus and the spirochaete. For example, at the beginning of the 1914-18 war, attempts were made to prevent both the adequate dissemination of prophylactic techniques and also the necessity for efficient and adequate after-treatment. These attempts were apparently only lessened when it was realized that the men were prepared to welcome venereal disease infection and thus avoid further combatant service.

The author's sombre conclusion is that one can end up wondering if one is anxiety-making over the dangers of expressing sane anxiety.

REFERENCES

- Hunter, John. *Treatise on Venereal Disease*. 1786.
Cobler, John. *The Reluctant Surgeon*. Heinemann, 1960.

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